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Wincanton Rural District Council.



ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

For the Year Ending 31st December, 1944.



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WINCANTON,
SOMERSET,
July, 1945.

TO THE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL OF WINCANTON.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I beg to lay before you my Annual Report for the year 1944.

1.—General Statistics.

Area (in acres)	...	...	64,540
Population (1944)	...	...	16,994
Number of inhabited houses (1931)	...	...	4,361
Number of families or separate occupiers (1931)	...	...	4,385
Rateable Value (31st March, 1944)	...	...	£74,799
Net Product of Penny Rate	....	...	£322 17s. 2d.

2.—Extracts from Vital Statistics of the Year.

BIRTHS.

		Males.	Females.		
Live Births	...	Total	152	171	Birth Rate 17.6
	...	Legitimate	139	153	
	...	Illegitimate	13	18	
Stillbirths	...	Total	7	5	Birth Rate 0.50
	...	Legitimate	7	5	
	...	Illegitimate	—	—	

DEATHS.

	Total	Males.	Females.	
Death from all causes	225	108	117	Death Rate 11.6

Number of Women dying in, or in consequence of, childbirth :—

(a) from sepsis	...	...	nil.
(b) from other causes	...	...	nil.

Deaths of Infants under one year of age :—

	Males.	Females.
Total	3	6
Legitimate	2	3
Illegitimate	1	3

Deaths of Infants under one week	...	...	...	4
„ „ from one to four weeks (inclusive)	...	...	...	4
„ „ from one to six months	...	...	...	1
„ „ from six to twelve months	...	...	...	0
Total				9

Deaths from Measles (all ages)	...	...	...	nil
„ Whooping Cough (all ages)	...	...	...	nil
„ Diarrhoea (under two years of age)	...	...	...	nil

There has not been any excessive mortality during the year.

The total number of Deaths occurring in the District was 225, compared with 221 in 1943.

The chief causes of Death were :—

Old Age 42. Heart Disease 41. Cancer 40. Cerebral Hæmorrhage 33.

In these four “ Causes of Death ”—

Those dying between the ages of 75 and 80 were 33.

„ „ „ „ „ „ 81 „ 85 „ 22.

„ „ „ „ „ „ 86 „ 90 „ 14.

„ „ over the age of 90 were 9.

A total of 78 or 30.22 per cent. of the total Deaths.

3.—Notifiable Diseases during the Year.

DISEASE.				Total Cases Notified.	Cases admitted to Isolation Hospital.	Total Deaths.
Diphtheria	...	...	..	1	1	nil
Scarlet Fever	...	..	...	38	35	nil
Enteric Fever	...	...	.	1	1	1
Pneumonia (all forms)	...	...	...	12	nil	5
Chicken Pox	...	...	...	39	1	nil
Whooping Cough	...	...	...	43	nil	nil
Malaria	...	...	...	9	nil	nil
Acute Polio-encephalitis	...	...	...	1	0	nil
Measles	...	...	...	160	11	nil
Puerperal Pyrexia	...	...	...	3	1	nil
Cerebro-Spinal Meningitis	...	...	...	3	3	nil
Tuberculosis	...	...	..	15	nil	8
(a) Respiratory	...	...	..	12		6
(b) Non-respiratory	..	..	..	3		2

Ophthalmia Neonatorum.

No case notified.

The following Schools were closed for Infectious Disease—

Charlton Horethorne for Measles in April.

North Barrow for Measles in May.

4.—Causes of Sickness.

Measles and Whooping Cough were again somewhat in evidence throughout the District. The type of both diseases was mild and there were no deaths.

Cases of Scarlet Fever were rather more numerous than usual, but the cases were of a mild type and there were no deaths.

Influenza occurred in an epidemic form during the early part of the year. Most of the cases were of short duration and complete recovery was the rule; but there were 8 deaths attributed to this disease during the year.

5.—Summary of Nursing Arrangements, Hospital and other Institutions available in the District.

A.—Professional Nursing in the Home.

(1) *General*.—There are 9 nurses in the district engaged in general district work who are affiliated to the County Nursing Association, and between them they cover the whole district.

(2) *For Infectious Diseases*.—Some of the cases of infectious diseases were removed to the Isolation Hospital, the remainder were either nursed by their relatives or by nurses obtained from Nursing Homes or Hospitals outside the district.

B.—Midwives.

There are 9 certified midwives practising in the district.

C.—Clinics and Treatment Centres.

In Wincanton there is one Tuberculosis Dispensary provided and staffed by the County Council.

D.—Hospitals available for the District.

(1) *Tuberculosis*.—One at Wincanton.

(2) *Fever*.—One at Wincanton, to which the following cases were admitted during the year—

Disease.	Number Admitted.	Number Died.
Scarlet Fever	35	nil
Diphtheria	1	nil
Measles	11	nil
Enteric Fever	1	1
Chicken Pox	1	nil
Puerperal Pyrexia	1	nil
Cerebro-Spinal Meningitis	3	nil
	—	—
	52	1
	—	—

(3) *Other*.—There is one Cottage Hospital at Wincanton, known as the “Wincanton and East Somerset Memorial Hospital,” for the treatment of general, medical and surgical cases.

There is one Cottage Hospital at Templecombe, known as the “Merthyr Guest Memorial Hospital,” for the treatment of general, medical and surgical cases; in addition, there are three wards available for Maternity Cases.

There is a Public Assistance Institution at Wincanton for the aged and infirm under the Public Assistance Committee.

E.—Institutional Provision for Unmarried Mothers, Illegitimate Infants and Homeless Children.

The only Institutions for any of the above are the Public Assistance Institution and Rodber House, Wincanton (for boys only), which are under the control of the Public Assistance Committee.

F.—Ambulance Facilities.

- (1) *For Infectious Cases.*—A motor ambulance is kept at the Isolation Hospital at Wincanton for the collection and removal of infectious cases.
- (2) *For Non-Infectious and Accident Cases.*—A motor ambulance, built and equipped by the Wincanton Rural District Council, is kept at Messrs. The Wincanton Transport and Engineering Co., Wincanton, Tel. 2321.

G.—Government Evacuation Scheme. Institutions for Evacuated Children.

Tout Hill House Sick Bay, Wincanton, with an average number of 15 patients.

Three Hostels, one at 60 High Street, Wincanton, one at 75 High Street, Wincanton, and one at 15 Balsam Park, Wincanton. The first two with a weekly average of 15 children and the last with a weekly average of 5.

The number of accompanied children in the District at commencement of 1944 was 229.

The number of accompanied children at the end of 1944 was 250.

The number of unaccompanied children at the commencement of 1944 was 397.

The number of unaccompanied children at the end of 1944 was 265.

Number of official evacuated adults in the District at the commencement of 1944 was 151 and at the end of 1944 there were 237.

Two official evacuated children died in 1944.

During the “flying bomb” raids towards the end of 1944 there were 2200 official evacuees in the District.

Official parties of evacuees returned to certain areas outside London on December 12th and 13th, 1944.

The Princess Christian Day Nursery at Cadbury Court, North Cadbury, contains approximately 40 official evacuated children under the age of five years.

H.—Scabies.

The number of cases of Scabies treated at the Tout Hill House Sick Bay during the year was 73. A few cases have been treated at home by their own doctor. There has been no necessity to have recourse to the Scabies Order 1941.

6.—Laboratory Work.

Examination of bacteriological and pathological specimens are carried out at the Public Health Laboratory at Taunton, and considerable use of this laboratory has been made during the year.

A supply of diphtheria antitoxin is kept at the Isolation Hospital, Wincanton.

7.—Public Health Officers of the Local Authority.

There is one Sanitary Inspector and Housing and Sanitary Surveyor, an Assistant Sanitary Inspector, and one Additional Sanitary Inspector (all whole time officers), a Public Health Inspector and myself (part time officers).

There are also 2 Health Visitors in the District.

8.—Water Supplies.

Castle Cary. A chlorination apparatus has been installed but, after a short time, a defect put the apparatus out of order.

Charlton Musgrove. To meet a water shortage, a fresh spring was collected, analysed, and added to the supply.

Milborne Port and Templecombe. The existing spring at Bradley Head has been developed so as to increase the yield materially and a connection has been made to the Templecombe supply.

Penselwood. An additional source of water at Combe Bottom has been located and is available for addition to the Penselwood supply when required.

9.—Drainage and Sewerage.

Certain of the work in connection with necessary repairs at the Henstridge Sewage Works have been put in hand.

Camping Sites.

No Camping Sites in this District have been registered.

Generally the only cases of Camping which occurred were cases of 2 or 3 days duration.

No special difficulties in connection with Camping are anticipated.

10.—Housing.

There remain many houses in which conditions are unsatisfactory owing to large families occupying small houses while there are still many houses in which the number of occupants is small in relation to the room available.

Although overcrowding is still slightly on the decline, the housing shortage is serious. The suspension of normal maintenance work during the war has also created unsatisfactory housing conditions.

The second four of the "agricultural" houses, referred to in my report last year, were completed early this year.

11.—Ministry of Health Enquiries.

Owing to a complaint from the Avon and Stour Catchment Board, the Ministry of Health held an enquiry into the unsatisfactory effluent from the Wincanton Sewage Works, on May 31st. After the enquiry at the Council Offices an inspection was made of the Works and the river Stour.

12.—Inspection and Supervision of Food.

(a) *Milk Supply.*

(1) Number of Producers on the Register	...	...	...	572
(2) Number of Distributors on the Register—				
(a) Distributors who are also Producers		...	...	38
(b) Distributors only	...	...	...	6

(b) *Meat Supervision.*

SLAUGHTER HOUSES—

Licensed	...	...	...	2	
Formerly registered—now unused—Application for licence pending		...	...	14	Total 16.
Knackers Yards. Licensed	...	...	....		3.

Air Raid Precautions.

The Casualty Services under the Air Raid Precautions Act are still up to strength and ready for any emergency.

In addition to the Four Rescue Parties and Two First Aid Points there has been formed a Dressing Station in each of the 34 Parishes in the District, these are adjoining or adjacent to the Rest and Feeding Centres (where these exist); they are staffed by an Officer in Charge (usually a lady with experience in First Aid and Home Nursing), and a varying number of Helpers; equipment has been and is being supplied by the County Council, the British Red Cross Society and by local effort.

The Report of the Sanitary and Public Health Inspectors are appended.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

T. E. COULSON,

Medical Officer of Health.

COUNCIL OFFICES,
WINCANTON,
June, 1945.

T. E. COULSON, Esq., M.D., F.R.C.S.E.,
Medical Officer of Health,
WINCANTON, SOMERSET.

Sir,

I beg to submit my annual report for the year ended 31st December, 1944.

The total number of Inspections for the year was 2755.

Water Supplies. Chlorination : The chlorination of the Penselwood supplies has been maintained throughout the year.

The chlorination of the Castle Cary public supply was commenced during the year.

Some water shortages have occurred. Demand has increased, but the principal cause has been a marked decrease in the yield of the springs. The measures taken to meet the shortages were :—

Charlton Musgrove. Two fresh springs were collected, tested and found satisfactory and were added to the supply.

Milborne Port and Templecombe. Alterations were carried out at Bradley Head resulting in a large increase of yield. A connection was made to the Templecombe pumping station.

Penselwood. Arrangements were made to collect the water from a new gathering ground at Combe Bottom, and additional water, amounting to 60,000 gallons per day, proved suitable and can be added to the supply as soon as it is required.

Water Supplies and Sewerage Act, 1944. The Council had already adopted the principle of meeting all agricultural needs wherever possible, and on the passing of this Act, the Council gave further consideration to the question of future extensions and I have been asked to prepare a report thereon.

Existing records show that 84 per cent. of the dwellinghouses are supplied by the Council and 8 per cent. are supplied by pipe from private sources.

Fifty-six samples of the public supplies have been tested by the Public Analyst with the following results :—

B.Coli absent	...	...	44
30—100 B.Coli per litre	...	..	7
100—1,000	„	...	4
Over 10,000	„	...	1

The extremely unsatisfactory sample came from the Bruton supply and was attributed to a defective collection chamber, at a time when rain followed a dry period. Further tests yielded better results.

Private Supplies. Shortages on private supplies have been experienced in Charlton Horethorne and Sutton Montis and the position in other small areas served by private supplies is not entirely satisfactory.

It appears to me desirable that all the major private supplies should be replaced or taken over by the Council.

Sewerage. Various repairs have been carried out to sewers at Ansford, Bruton, Sutton Montis and Wincanton.

The Sewage Works have functioned satisfactorily at Bruton, Castle Cary, Milborne Port and Henstridge although in the last mentioned much of the necessary maintenance work referred to in my last report is still unfinished.

Although the Sparkford and Queen Camel Sewage Works have been generally satisfactory, the milk waste, which dominates the sewage at times, and the flooding of the works from the stream, have caused some trouble.

The position at Wincanton remains extremely unsatisfactory and a further extension of free water supplies has been made.

Suggestions were made that the provision of lagoons would afford some improvement in the effluent. The Avon and Stour Catchment Board offered to carry out the necessary excavation. The Council, however, decided that this, so far as it was practicable, would not effect any appreciable improvement, and following a communication from the Board, the Ministry of Health held an enquiry into the matter. The Council maintained their point of view and the subject is still under discussion.

The Water Supplies and Sewerage Act abolishes special rates for sewerage from April 1st, 1945, and the Council anticipate extensions of the schemes generally. I am preparing a comprehensive report which is due for presentation early in the New Year.

Housing. The housing position remains very unsatisfactory and the drafting of more building labour to the "home front line" areas has made matters worse. It has not been practicable to take general action under the Housing Act. Very little can be done until labour returns and the necessary materials come into supply.

Statutory action has been taken in three cases, but only one of these notices has been complied with.

As a result of informal action ten houses have been made fit.

Two cases of overcrowding have been abated.

The number of unfit houses licensed for human habitation increased from thirty-one at the beginning of the year to thirty-six at the end of the year.

The number of houses, other than hostels, requisitioned by the Council for the use of evacuees and persons inadequately housed increased from 48 at the beginning of the year to 57 at the end.

Much consideration has been given to the post-war housing position and the following first-year building programme has been approved :—

Wincanton 24.	Castle Cary 12.	Bruton 24.
Milborne Port 16.	Sparkford 4.	Templecombe 16.

Preliminary surveys of sites have been made and negotiations for most of these are in progress.

Full support has been given to the Somerset Advisory Housing Committee and consideration has already been given to the problem of obtaining the necessary technical assistance. Preparations for the housing survey are being made. A junior has been engaged and it is anticipated he will be able to take an active part in the survey.

Notifiable Disease, etc.

No case of bed bug infestation has been discovered.

Two cases of flea infestation have been dealt with.

A few cases of scabies have been notified to me and in four cases (excluding those from Hostels) the bedding and/or clothing have been treated at the Isolation Hospital disinfectors.

The usual disinfection of premises has been carried out after cases of infectious disease. Arrangements have continued to be made for the disinfection of bedding at the Isolation Hospital, Wincanton.

Sanitary Accommodation. One vault closet and six earth closets have been replaced by water closets. Eleven new water closets have been constructed.

House Refuse. House refuse collections are made weekly in Bruton and Wincanton; fortnightly in Castle Cary and Ansford and monthly in Henstridge, Milborne Port, Queen Camel and Templecombe. The methods of collection and of disposal remain unsatisfactory.

The Council have had under consideration the question of a complete house refuse scheme as soon as possible after the war and they have approved the proposal in principle.

Salvage. The quantity of salvage has further declined and the position can no longer be recorded as satisfactory. The decision to cease the collection of tins and of rubber has no doubt had its influence but, in my opinion, the real cause has been the

improvement in the war situation leading to a return to the wasteful ways and methods of pre-war years. The sales results were as follows, the corresponding figures for 1943 being given in brackets :—

			Tons		Value £	
Paper	...	....	98.4	(133.0)	650	(898)
Iron	....	...	23.6	(54.0)	56.8	(78)
Tins	...	...	85.7	(130.0)	112.4	(188)
Non-ferrous Metals		...	2.2	(2.8)	28.5	(58)
Textiles	...	...	11.5	(17.6)	125.5	(191)
Bottles	...	...	—	(9.0)	—	(63.5)
Bones	...	...	13.9	(15.0)	66.2	(72)
Rubber	...	...	4.5	(10.4)	10.2	(26)
Miscellaneous	...	...	.7	(5.2)	11.6	(4)
			—	—	—	—
			240.5	(377.0)	1,061.2	(1,578.5)
			—	—	—	—

Public Health Act, 1936. Nine statutory notices have been served and eight of these have been complied with.

Seventy-five informal notices have been served, sixty-six of these being complied with.

Milk Supplies. The number of Tuberculin Tested licences increased from forty-six at the beginning of the year to sixty-seven at the end, while the number of Accredited licences decreased from one hundred and fifteen to ninety-five.

A licence to pasteurise milk was granted to Messrs. Dried Milk Products Ltd. 773 samples have been taken as follows :—

TUBERCULIN TESTED—235 of which 199 were satisfactory, a percentage of 84.

ACCREDITED—490 of which 348 were satisfactory, a percentage of 71.

PASTEURISED—9. Satisfactorily pasteurised 5. Of these 3 were shown to have suffered slight contamination after pasteurisation. Four were not quite satisfactory.

Milk tested for the presence of Tubercle Bacilli—39, of which 1 showed positive results.

There has been a definite improvement in the designated milk results as, in comparison with last year, the percentage of good results has increased by eleven in the case of Tuberculin Tested and eight in the case of Accredited.

The position in regard to the cleansing of churns is not wholly satisfactory owing partly to labour difficulties and partly to the difficulty of obtaining new churns.

Four licences to produce Accredited milk have been suspended by the County Council.

Few premises have been reconstructed, but inspections have shown that the standard of cleanliness and the methods of production shows a definite improvement over the pre-war period despite the difficulties of labour shortage.

Meat and Food Inspection. Only two slaughterhouses were in operation at the beginning of the year. These were attached to the two bacon factories at Bruton and one ceased to be used during the year. 5,328 pigs have been inspected. The chief condemnations were 7 carcasses, 1 side, 312 heads and 175 plucks principally as a result of Tuberculosis. Full details of condemnations are retained for record purposes.

The percentage of carcasses affected in some part with Tuberculosis has decreased from 8.6 last year to 6.2 this year.

Inspections of canned food have been made at various Ministry of Food depots. The inspection of food at retail shops, etc. has been continued. No notices requiring structural alterations have been served. The total quantity of food, inclusive of meat, condemned during the year amounted to about seven tons. A large proportion of this was disposed of for pig food, or, in the case of meat, for fat extraction.

A somewhat disturbing feature is the number of damaged and unsaleable tins of food, some unfit, released, often after long storage, to retail shops and to hotels, canteens, etc. It would be better if all such tins could be inspected either immediately before release or immediately after delivery, but possibly it is labour difficulties which prevent this.

Plans. Forty-three plans have been presented. Of these thirty-seven have been approved and six disapproved.

During the year twenty-one Certificates of Essentiality have been issued and in ten cases the work has been completed.

Rats and Mice (Destruction) Act, 1919. Infestation Order, 1943. Following the survey referred to in my last report, careful consideration was given to the recommendations of the Ministry of Food and a full-time operator was engaged and a store rented and equipped. The information obtained at the excellent courses arranged by the Research Section of the Ministry of Food, Infestation Branch, made it clear that action dealing only with individual premises at one time would be unsatisfactory, as only one method used simultaneously over the whole area of each separate rat colony could be successful.

Instead of following the policy envisaged by this instruction, the Ministry have persisted in the maintenance of the liability of the occupier, and in the right of the occupier to carry out the work himself. This, in my opinion, is the one factor which has made the Act a failure and this influenced the Council in their decision that the right policy, particularly in war-time, was the destruction of rats, and, in pursuance of this policy they decided not to charge in all cases where fees would obstruct or delay operations.

Accordingly, the Rodent Operator has had few difficulties and has achieved excellent results.

During the period of operations to December 31st, during which time he has had part-time temporary assistance, he has surveyed 305 premises, taken action in 275 premises and destroyed rats to an estimated number of 12,420.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

R. G. GRAY.

CASTLE CARY,

SOMERSET,

January 22nd, 1945.

To T. E. COULSON, ESQ., M.D., F.R.C.S.E.

Medical Officer of Health,

WINCANTON.

Sir,

CASTLE CARY SUB-DISTRICT.

I beg to submit my Report for the year ended the 31st December, 1944. I regret that I cannot report much progress in regard to necessary repairs and improvements on various factory and shop premises owing to the extreme difficulty of obtaining the required labour and materials.

Housing (Rural Workers) Acts, 1926—43.

I have collected the annual certificates from the owners of reconstructed houses and these have been forwarded to the County Council. The conditions under which the grants were made are being generally observed. In one case a slightly excess rent was being charged but this has been refunded by the owner. The inclusive rents fixed by the County Council for some of the houses reconstructed and reconditioned under these Acts are very low and allows no margin to enable the owners to carry out necessary repairs from time to time at the existing high rate of the cost of labour and materials. Neither is the owner apparently allowed to charge additional rent in cases of improvements agreed upon by both owner and occupier, or in cases of advanced rates. This restriction militates against such desirable improvements as the provision of bath rooms, indoor sanitation, improved cooking arrangements, or the laying on of electricity.

Factories Act, 1937.

At the Electric Saw Mills at Sparkford new and improved sanitary conveniences and better washing facilities have been provided. At the Clanville Saw Mills plans have been submitted to the Council, also for the provision of improved sanitary conveniences and better washing facilities. All the bakehouses have been visited periodically, and where necessary verbal notices have been given to the occupiers to carry out necessary limewashing. The bakehouses generally are kept in a clean condition.

Infestation Order, 1943.

During the last three months of the year the Councils Rat Operator has succeeded in destroying a large number of rats at Bruton, Castle Cary and Queen Camel. In cases of infestation of farm premises which have been observed, the facts have been reported to the Somerset Agricultural War Executive Committee so that their Pest Officer may deal with such cases.

Food and Drugs Act, 1938 and Shops Act, 1934.

Unfit foods detected when visiting the shops have been referred to the Salvage Officer for salvaging. The washing facilities at one shop has been improved.

Salvage for War Purposes.

As Salvage Steward for a part of Castle Cary I have distributed cards supplied from time to time by the Salvage Officer, notifying occupiers of the dates for collection, and the kind of materials required.

Public Health Act, 1936.

I have referred complaints which I have received under this Act to Mr. Gray who has dealt with them.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

E. J. HAINE PADFIELD,

Inspector.

